

By Patrick Goodenough

<http://www.cnsnews.com/public/content/article.aspx?RsrcID=51826>

In late 2006, the U.S. awarded permanent normal trade relations – formerly known as most-favored nation status – to Vietnam, paving the way for it to join the World Trade Organization early the following year.

The Bush administration also removed Vietnam from the “countries of particular concern” list drawn up under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, citing improvements despite assertions to the contrary by critics including the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom**, an independent panel set up under the IRFA to make recommendations to Congress and the White House.

Duy Hoang, a spokesman for Viet Tan, a pro-democracy group banned in Vietnam, took part in Thursday’s Capitol Hill event, and focused on the regime’s clampdown on Internet dissidents.